

**Laboratory Alerts: *Serratia marcescens* Contamination of IV Solution  
JCAHO Imposters/Hospital Security**

**S. marcescens contamination:** The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has learned of 11 cases of *Serratia marcescens* bacteremia associated with magnesium sulfate solution manufactured by Pharmedium (Lake Forest, IL) that may have been intrinsically contaminated with *S. marcescens*. In March 2005, the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services (NJDHSS) was notified of a cluster of *S. marcescens* blood stream infections involving five patients hospitalized at a New Jersey health-care facility. All five patients developed sepsis caused by *S. marcescens* and had received intravenous magnesium sulfate manufactured by Pharmedium prior to illness onset. All patients responded to ciprofloxacin treatment, are well and have been discharged from the health-care facility. In an earlier outbreak in a California hospital in January 2005, 6 cases of *S. marcescens* bacteremia in cardiovascular surgery patients were identified, all of whom received magnesium sulfate manufactured by Pharmedium from a lot that differed from the implicated lot in New Jersey.

The NJDHSS laboratory recovered *S. marcescens* from an opened bag of magnesium sulfate (1 gram in 5% dextrose and water; lot # 100504900049, expiration date 4/4/05) and an unopened bag of magnesium sulfate (1 gram in 5% dextrose and water; lot # 100504900049). The patient isolates and those obtained from the bags of magnesium sulfate solution had identical antibiotic susceptibility profiles. Molecular typing to determine relatedness of the isolates is being performed by the CDC. Pharmedium provides pharmaceutical products to hospitals nationwide. CDC is working with state health departments and the Food and Drug Administration to determine the magnitude of this outbreak. Testing of other product lots is underway to determine the extent of possible contamination.

**Laboratory Action:** Please save any *S. marcescens* isolates from blood cultures that may have been associated with the use of this product for possible further testing by MDCH. Contact Dr. James Rudrik, Microbiology Section Manager, Bureau of Laboratories at 517-335-8063 and/or Teri Lee Dyke, Bureau of Epidemiology at 517-335-8165.

**Hospital Security:** There have been at least three recent incidents of unauthorized individuals posing as *Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations* (JCAHO) surveyors asking to tour various areas of hospitals. The recent incidents occurred in MI, CA, and MA. Other incidents have also been reported involving irregular inquiries, surveillance, and suspicious employees or patients. The intent of these individuals is unknown, but these

Michigan Department of Community Health – Bureau of Laboratories incidents serve as a reminder that all healthcare staff should remain vigilant, and report any suspicious activity or individuals to hospital security officials or local law enforcement.

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